

CAG Report on Clean Ganga Project

239. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN:
SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA:
SHRI SWARAJ KAUSHAL:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Comptroller and Auditor General of India has recently declared in his Report that the Grandiose Clean Ganga Project has failed to achieve its objective despite an expenditure of over Rs. 900 crore in the past 15 years and that quality of Ganga water, as also its tributaries has actually deteriorated further since 1993;

(b) if so, whether the National River Conservation Authority, and Ministry of Environment and Forests are thinking of fixing the responsibility for this state of affairs and issuing further guidelines to ensure effective and timely implementation of Clean Ganga Project; and

(c) what action Government are taking on the CAG report to ensure that there is not further wastage and the objectives of the Plan are achieved?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALY): (a) to (c) The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India in his report on Ganga Action Plan for the year ended March, 2000 has covered the review of performance of Ganga Action Plan Phase I and Ganga Action Plan Phase II. As for the Ganga Action Plan Phase I which was started in 1985, the programme has been declared closed as on 31.3.2000 and a total expenditure of Rs. 452 crore has been incurred on it. Under this Plan, a capacity to treat 835 million litres per day of sewage and other facilities like low cost toilets, crematoria, bathing ghats etc. have been created. Certain problems of operation and maintenance of the assets have emerged in Bihar and to some extent in Uttar Pradesh. The matter is being constantly pursued with these State

Governments at the highest level. As for the Ganga Action Plan Phase II, this programme was approved in three stages from 1993 to 1996. The Plan covers pollution abatement works in 95 towns along the Ganga and its tributaries namely, Yamuna, Gomti, and Damodar. The approved cost of the Plan is Rs. 1276.26 crore. A total capacity of about 1861 million litres per day of sewage treatment alongwith allied works is to be created under this Plan.

The implementation of Plan has delayed due to the following reasons:

- (i) The scheme of National River Conservation Plan of which Ganga Action Plan Phase II is a part, was originally envisaged on 50:50 cost sharing basis between Centre and States. However, in view of the difficulties of the State Governments in bringing their 50% share, the National River Conservation Authority under the Chairmanship of Prime Minister at its 9th Meeting held in July, 1997 converted the scheme into a 100% Centrally Funded Scheme. But the Cabinet approval to this decision could be obtained only in November, 1998. During the intervening period of 16 months, the States were not providing their share in anticipation that the scheme will become 100% Centrally funded. As a result, the progress of the scheme became very slow.
- (ii) The convention technologies proposed earlier did not address the problem of bacterial pollution fully. In order to address this issue, a decision was taken in July, 1999 to adopt oxidation pond based sewage treatment in all the places. These ponds, although requiring large areas of land are capable of reducing fecal coliform suitably. The State Governments could not provide such areas of land of larger towns which account for major chunk of the capital cost. As a result, the progress of work was extremely slow for nearly 18 months.
- (iii) Until 1999-2000, grants were released to the State

Governments. Transfer of such grants to the implementing agencies were invariably delayed in almost all the States for a period ranging from 6-9 months affecting the progress of work adversely.

- (iv) The quality of preparation of Detailed Project Reports was not up to the mark from a number of State which resulted in significant delays.
- (v) There were delays in land acquisition in Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.
- (vi) Decision was taken by the Ministry not to release funds for Ganga Action Plan Phase II in Bihar because the operation and maintenance of assets created under Ganga Action Plan Phase II was not satisfactory.

As a result, a capacity of 634 million litres per day of sewage has been commissioned so far. The aforesaid bottlenecks have now been resolved and the Plan is now targetted to be completed by 2005. Thus the impact of the Action Plan on the improvement of water quality of rivers and achievement of objectives can be expected only after completion of the Plan.

Sample testing of Sangam water

240. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the newsitem published in the Hindustan Times dated 19th January, 2001 under the caption, "How safe is holy water of Sangam";
- (b) if so, Government's reaction thereto;
- (c) whether any sample testing of the water from Sangam has been carried at by the Central Pollution Control Board or any other Government agency;
- (d) if so, the results thereof and if not, the reasons therefor; and
- (e) what specific steps are proposed to be taken in this regard?